



Martin O'Malley
Mayor

Master Plan for the Upton Community



Otis Rolley, III
Director

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Acknowledgements

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Upton Master Plan Committee

- Baltimore City Council
- Baltimore Development Corporation
- Baltimore Housing
- Bethel AME Church
- Bethel Outreach Center
- Jul Enterprise
- Marble Hill Community Association
- Pennsylvania Avenue Redevelopment Collaborative
- Upton Planning Committee, Inc.

Special thanks to the residents of Upton who participated in the planning process for their dedication to their neighborhood and to AB Associates for facilitating the planning process and drafting the plan.

In 2003, Bethel Outreach Center received Community Development Block Grant Funds from the City of Baltimore to complete a Master Plan for Upton. Bethel Outreach Center joined forces with the Upton Planning Committee and subcontracted with AB Associates to produce "Renewal, Revitalization, Restoration: A Master Plan for the Upton Community." This plan is based on that document, with updated information that reflects initiatives that have taken place since the plan was completed. For example, this plan includes a proposal from Baltimore Housing for rehabilitation and redevelopment, a new interim strategy for vacant land management, and a summary of the State Center Transit Oriented Development initiative.

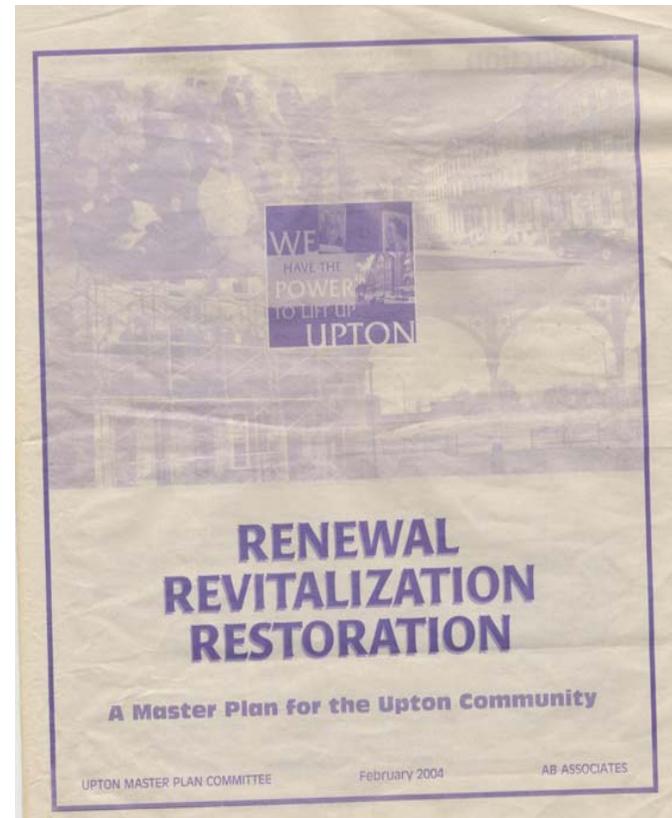


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Department of Planning Mission Statement

To provide the highest level services and leadership in urban and strategic planning, historical and architectural preservation, zoning, design, development, and capital budgeting to promote the sustained economic, social, and community development of the City of Baltimore.

Upton Vision Statement

Adopted at the Second Community Congress on November 1, 2003

In the future, Upton will reclaim the vestiges of its distinct, African-American heritage. Like New Orleans, Harlem, Atlanta and Chicago neighborhoods, it will be the hub of a cultural revitalization where the memory of the great entertainers, artists and civic leaders who proudly proclaimed Upton as their neighborhood will be the beacon that draws investment back into the community. In this future, the Upton community will be envied for its fine architecture, and the location of places for cultural expression. Business development, social services and health activities will contribute to the creation of a feeling of well-being and belonging. This vision upholds the value that the Upton community has historically placed in the many faith-based organizations that will continue to promote unity and harmony among its growing, diverse neighbors. The place that Upton will become will be clearly defined by adequate open space, green areas, signage, historic markers, gateways and real estate development initiatives that will return Upton to its place as a prominent City and national neighborhood.

Background

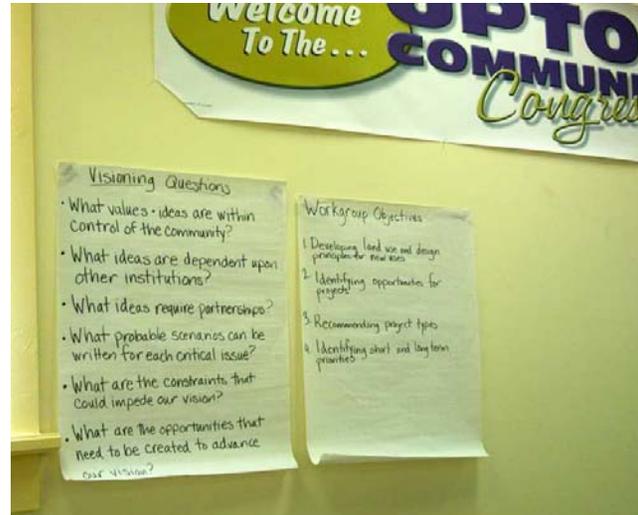
Upton is a community steeped in tradition: a once thriving hub of African American culture and commerce, and home to a flourishing middle class community. Over time, Upton, like many Baltimore neighborhoods, lost the places and people that made it sustainable. Once grand homes are now deteriorating or vacant. Services closed and were replaced with absentee-owned businesses that do not meet the everyday needs of the community. Children play in unsafe places and loiter on street corners because they have nowhere to go. Residents cannot find jobs, training or the health and social services that are necessary to turn their lives around.

The Upton of tomorrow will be a different place. Drawing on its roots, residents know they must look for ways to attract new homeowners to the community. Physical renewal will go hand in hand with social and community renewal. Residents will be able to take advantage of job training, health care, educational enrichment programs and youth activities. A healthy community - physically and socially - will result in an economically successful community.

Planning Process

The community participation process was designed around a series of conversations that involved asking questions and receiving feedback about ideals, values and partnerships. Participants were asked a series of questions about their neighborhood and were then asked to relate their responses to a physical development or land use issue. Answers described the potential for housing, commercial development and social services. Stakeholders identified desired outcomes as well as the opportunities and constraints associated with each of these outcomes.

The community participation process included three components: two Community Congress events, workgroups and stakeholder interviews. The community participation process began with the First Upton Community Congress, which was convened on June 7, 2003. Over 150 individuals came together to define what Upton might be and to craft a vision for the Upton of tomorrow. Participants spent several hours engaged in visioning sessions, discussing where they live, work and shop. Each group addressed the same visioning questions, which were intended to help stakeholders begin rethinking their perceptions of themselves and their neighborhood. The issues and strategies raised during the Congress were further addressed and refined through three workgroups that met throughout the summer: Commercial Revitalization, Housing and Transportation.



Interviews with 20 individual stakeholders provided an additional opportunity to determine how residents, business owners and faith-based leaders perceived their community, the changes that have taken place and how they use the services that Upton currently offers. A strong consensus emerged over the need to redevelop or remove vacant houses and to create a mixed-income community: one that would attract market-rate residents to Upton, while providing housing for current residents. Drug trafficking was ranked as Upton's number one social problem, and until this problem is resolved, improvements in Upton were not seen as likely to succeed. Pennsylvania Avenue was described as marginal and unattractive and in need of everyday convenience services as well as restaurants and high quality businesses that would appeal to residents and customers that lived outside of Upton. Everyone agreed that in order for Upton to move forward, existing organizations, particularly the faith-based community, need to collaborate.

The most important outcome of the community planning process was the lively, productive discussion among many community stakeholders. These individuals recognize the importance of working together to achieve common goals. With patience, cooperation and a shared vision, the Upton community will be well prepared to capitalize on its existing assets, guide revitalization efforts and, ultimately, be the authors of their own future.

Planning Principles

1. Build on strengths.

Upton has a wealth of assets that can be used to attract new investment and generate a renewed interest in the community. Market-driven initiatives must build on the unique characteristics of Upton to experience greater long-term success.

2. Preserve the existing character of the neighborhood.

One of Upton's strongest assets is its housing stock. Spacious homes, architectural details and a strong, compact urban grid create a feeling of community that should be strengthened and preserved.

3. Create a mixed-income community.

Historically, successful neighborhoods have a range of incomes, services and housing types. New development should strive to attract new market-rate housing, while continuing to provide quality affordable housing.

4. Capitalize on the community's African American heritage.

Cultural and heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry. Upton's unique place in local and national history provides a wealth of opportunities that can be leveraged to provide positive economic benefits.

5. Provide a range of amenities that meet the physical and economic needs of professionals, families and senior citizens.

Successful neighborhoods offer institutions and services for their residents. Many of these elements exist in Upton but require physical improvements, capacity building and a collaborative effort to be considered viable institutions.

6. Build a critical mass of residents to support a viable commercial district.

Successful commercial districts require strong and economically successful residential areas. Encouraging new residential developments will attract new customers who will ultimately provide the critical mass necessary to attract high quality commercial development.

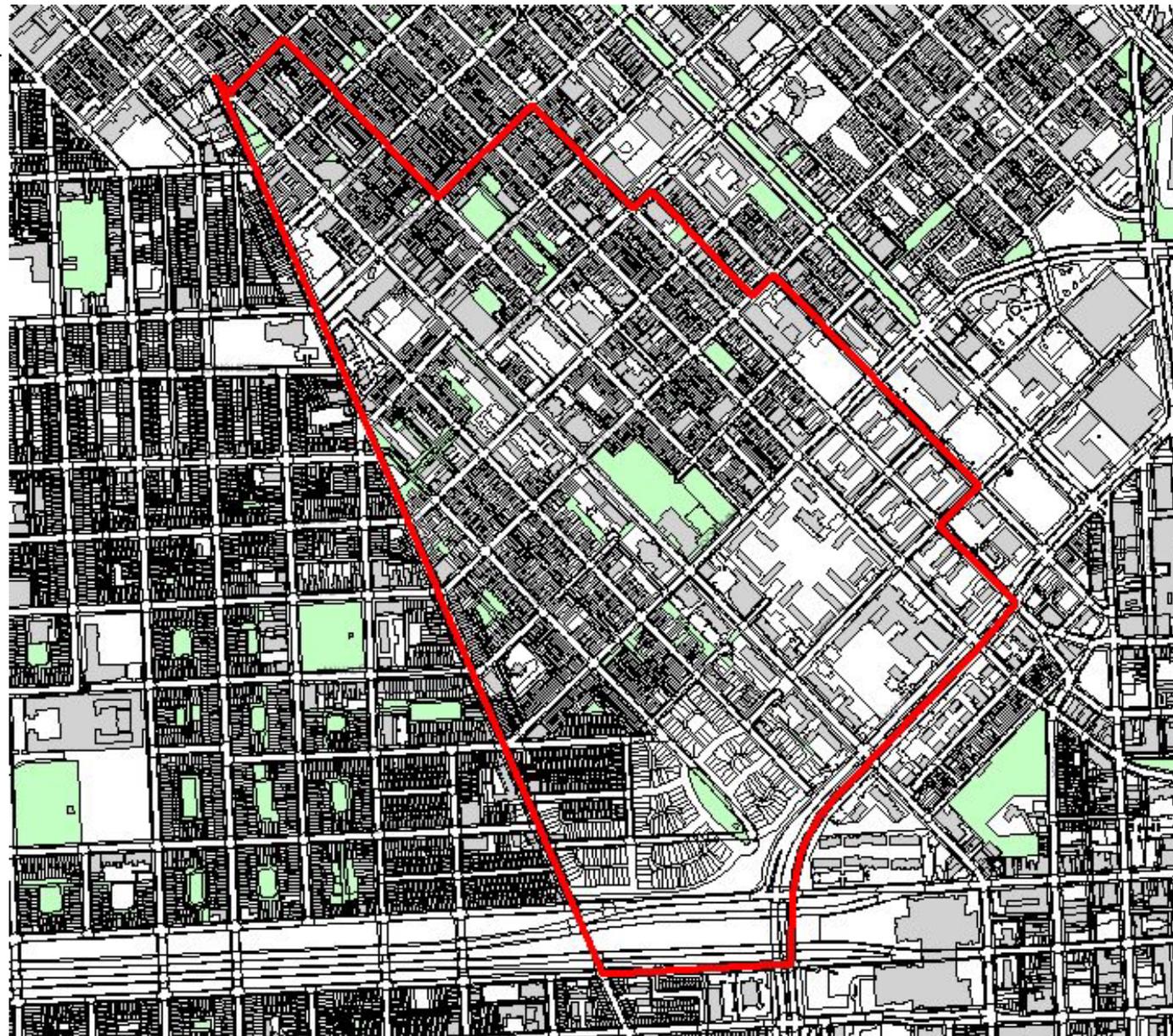
7. Concentrate new development on vacant land.

New development should be directed to the vacant parcels as one strategy for preserving the neighborhood's existing character.

8. Minimize displacement.

Throughout the planning process, stakeholders were clear that residents living in Upton should remain a part of the community. Both new development and rehabilitation of existing buildings should be scheduled in a way that minimizes displacing residents.

Area Map



History

Upton is one of Baltimore's historic neighborhoods and enjoys a reputation as one of the nation's premiere centers of African American history and culture. Beginning after World War I, Upton was home to Baltimore's growing African American middle class, many of whom continue to have long-standing ties to the community and play an active role in its political, social and cultural institutions. Upton can claim numerous local and national "firsts," many of which were born out of racial and discriminatory policies and attitudes. Although separated and excluded by race, it was these patterns and practices that enabled the community to create its place in history.



Like many city neighborhoods, Upton began as an outgrowth of country estates. From 1830 through the Civil War, homes were developed on former estates, including the Upton Mansion. Pennsylvania Avenue was the primary commercial artery and was the first road to link rural areas to the northwest portion of the City. Most homes built after the Civil War were built on north-south streets. More modest and working class homes were built on east-west streets and alleys. The majority of buildings have retained their original architectural details although they suffer from substantial deterioration and deferred maintenance.

The Civil War through World War I marked the urbanization of Upton. Investors built the majority of three story homes along Druid Hill Avenue and McCulloh Street, which were intended to attract wealthy residents. Many of Upton's churches were built during the 1870's and reflect the community's growth and prosperity. This era also marked the beginning of a strong African American presence in Upton. Families that could afford to, bought the former homes of wealthy German residents on Druid Hill Avenue and McCulloh Street. Less wealthy families purchased more modest two-story and alley homes. Nine blocks of housing, developed near where McCulloh Homes now stands, became an African American neighborhood in the early 1890's. In 1910, George McMechen attempted to purchase a home at 1834 McCulloh Street and was refused based on his race. His efforts resulted in the City's first exclusionary zoning laws to prevent African Americans from purchasing homes in certain neighborhoods.

Upton's distinction as the "Harlem of Baltimore" was earned between World War I and World War II. Professionals purchased homes along Druid Hill Avenue, while Pennsylvania Avenue became the community's commercial and cultural district. By 1917, a majority of the city's black property owners and most of its African American teachers, clergy, government workers and shopkeepers made Upton their home.

The entertainment center of Upton was Pennsylvania Avenue. The Douglass Theater opened in 1922, becoming the Royal Theater in 1926. It was the site of the city's first talking movie theater that featured African American actors, ultimately becoming the most renowned theater in the region and used by performers on a national circuit. The Royal Theater was complemented by the 2,000 seat Regent Theater and a host of smaller clubs and cabarets that featured dancing, jazz and ragtime.



Upton's most distinguished educational and community institutions also reflect the growth of the community as a flourishing African American center.

- Frederick Douglass High School had many notable graduates including Thurgood Marshall, the first African American U.S. Supreme Court Justice.
- Booker T. Washington Middle School, the former Western High School, was integrated in 1929.
- The Lancet, one of Upton's first newspapers, was published in 1882 and later became the Advocate Press.
- The Afro American was located at 1112 Fremont Avenue from 1894 to 1996.

From its earliest days, Upton's religious institutions were centers of social, political and economic justice.

- Sharp Street Methodist Church, now at 1206 Etting Street, is distinguished as the oldest church built by and for African Americans. In the 1930's Sharp Street was home to the Citywide Young People's Forum, which met weekly to hear from national civil rights leaders.
- Bethel AME was the City's first established African Methodist Episcopal congregation, moving to Upton in 1910.
- St. Peter Claver, established in 1888, is the City's oldest African American Catholic congregation.
- Union Baptist Church, often regarded as the birthplace of the City's 1960's civil rights movement, was established in 1852 and moved to its current home at 1219 Druid Hill Avenue in 1905.
- The Elks Monumental Lodge at 1528 Madison Avenue is the third oldest chapter in the country.

Issues and Recommendations

HOUSING

Housing Market

Although the housing market in Upton is appreciating, it is not appreciating as fast as the rest of Baltimore City. Upton's home values grew a modest 14% between 2000 and 2004, from an average of \$24,613 (49 sales) to \$28,054 (46 sales).

The rate of appreciation is dramatically lower than Upton's immediate eastern neighbors, Madison Park and Bolton Hill. Bolton Hill experienced a gain of 78% with averages in 2000 of \$163,256 growing to \$290,529 in 2004. Madison Park, a neighborhood long considered a transition zone, experienced a 206% increase in the same four year period with values going from an average of \$81,114 in 2000 to \$248,539 in 2004.

In the past, Upton has often been equated with the neighborhoods of Druid Heights and Harlem Park, Upton's immediate neighbors to the north and west. These neighborhoods share similar housing stock and have traditionally had similar turnover rates. Analyses of sales recorded in the first six months of 2005 suggest that the Upton may be separating itself from its western neighbors, shifting into the transitional role previously held by its neighbor to the east, Madison Park. The average sales price in Upton for the first half of 2005 is \$50,205, an increase of 78% over the 2004 average.

Reservoir Hill to the north, Madison Park to the east and Heritage Crossing to the south all have had significant investment by private and public entities in the past several years, and each has increased at a rate greater than the City average. As preliminary 2005 calculations indicate, this growing strength is moving westward, making it more important than ever to stabilize and strengthen the housing market in Upton.

Concentration of Poverty

In Upton, sixty percent of families with children under five years old are living in poverty. Children who are born into poverty are more likely to be poor as adults. Furthermore, living in a neighborhood where almost everyone else is also poor greatly increases an individual's likelihood of being poor as an adult. The reasons that neighborhood conditions have such a strong influence on individual success vary greatly, from a lack of positive role models to a lack of institutional support systems, but the relationship between neighborhood concentrations of poverty and the ability of an individual to achieve the American Dream is clear.

In addition to having a negative affect on individual success stories, concentrations of poverty also have a negative impact on neighborhoods. Neighborhoods with concentrations of poverty have a hard time attracting outside investment. For example, basic services, such as grocery stores, often refuse to locate in poor neighborhoods.

UPTON POVERTY STATUS IN 1999	#	%
Families	610	45.2
With related children under 18 years	480	55.2
With related children under 5 years	215	59.7
Families with female householder, no husband present	475	52.2
With related children under 18 years	405	62.3
With related children under 5 years	180	66.7
Individuals	3,030	48.1
18 years and over	1,925	43.9
65 years and over	495	50.5
Related children under 18 years	1,090	57.4

In order to de-concentrate poverty, one of the principles of the Upton Master Plan is to create mixed-income communities that integrate a range of incomes, services and housing types. There should be a variety of housing types, both rental and for-sale in a range of prices that allow residents to remain in Upton throughout all stages of their life: professionals, married couples, families, empty nesters and the elderly.

To achieve the overall goal of creating a mixed income community in Upton will require a multi-pronged approach that includes historic preservation, rehabilitation of existing housing stock, construction of new housing stock, and management of vacant land. Upton's increasing housing values indicate that there is an interest in the neighborhood that can be capitalized through a variety of marketing and financing strategies.

Heritage Crossing

Heritage Crossing's success as a mixed income community demonstrates the appeal that new housing types can have even when they are located near areas in need of improvement. For sale units in Heritage Crossing included 183 three-bedroom units and 2 two bedroom units. Developed under the HOPE VI housing program, units were available to those families earning 60% to 115% of the area's median income. Original sales prices ranged from \$67,750 to \$88,000. Prices increased as later phases were developed, with a more attractive product priced in the \$90,000 to \$130,000 range. The average age of homebuyers was 38, with an average household size of two persons. 45% of buyers came from outside of Baltimore City, including Baltimore County and central Maryland (39%), Washington, DC (2%) and northern Virginia (3%).



One of the premises in developing Heritage Crossing was the belief that a suburban-style product would attract buyers that might otherwise overlook the City. The statistics about who purchased homes validates that premise and can be used to develop future mixed income housing that will attract a similar range of households.

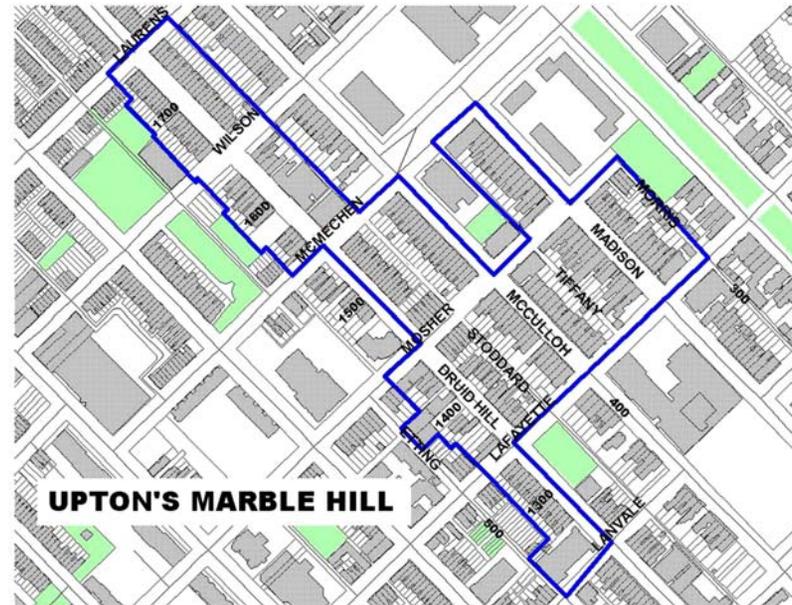
Despite Heritage Crossing's overall success, the design has proven problematic for a number of reasons:

- There is little distinction between public and private space.
- Perkins Park is not programmed to encourage community interaction.
- There is no visual or contextual linkage between Heritage Crossing and the adjacent neighborhood.

Future mixed income development will benefit from lessons learned during the development and implementation of Heritage Crossing.

Historic Preservation

There are two historic districts in the area: Old West Baltimore National Register Historic District and Upton's Marble Hill Baltimore City Local Historic District. Properties within both of these historic districts are eligible for City, State and Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits.



An additional Local Historic District should be considered for West Upton, including the Edmondson Avenue Triangle area. The boundaries should include the 800 blocks of Harlem and Edmondson avenues, the 700 blocks of Dolphin and Brune streets and the 700 and 800 blocks of Fremont Avenue. The historic district will help support the rehabilitation efforts that are in process in this area.

In addition to two historic districts, there are four local designated landmark sites in Upton: Bethel AME Church, Sharp Street Memorial Church, Booker T. Washington Middle School and Douglas Memorial Church. Several other properties are identified through CHAP's Marker Program such as the Henry Highland Garrett Park and the former community center at 1313 Druid Hill Avenue.

Even with these designations in place, most of Upton's historically significant properties are not marked and go unnoticed by the general public. Many of these sites are also vacant and boarded. These include:

- the Arch Social Club
- the Harriet Beecher Stowe House at 1223-25 Argyle Avenue
- the Henry Hobson Richardson Moorish properties in the 1500 block of Druid Hill Avenue
- William Fitzgerald House at 1206 Druid Hill Avenue
- Upton School



In addition to designating historic districts and landmarks, the community must actively pursue historic preservation goals by:

- Creating a Local Design Review Committee to review and approve all proposed changes to historic property. Design guidelines should be established to protect the integrity of buildings and promote a unified appearance. Guidelines should be written in simple language and include illustrations.
 - Offer design assistance.
 - Create a Contractors Directory.
 - Develop a Certified Rehabilitation Specialist Program.
 - Create a series of hands-on, non-technical workshops covering all of the elements of preservation and renovation.

Through a partnership with the Marble Hill Community Association, the Baltimore City Department of Planning, the Commission on Historic and Architectural Preservation, Baltimore Housing, Baltimore Heritage, Jubilee Baltimore and the Heritage Area of the Mayor's Office, a deferred loan/grant will be provided this fall 2005 to Marble Hill's residents for facade repairs/improvements in accordance with CHAP guidelines. The program will also assist residents with tax credit preparation, offer residents technical assistance in completing historic rehab projects, offer assistance with complicated regulations and forms and create a series of hands-on, non-technical workshops covering all of the elements of preservation and renovation. The maximum loan/grant amount is \$10,000 for 5 years.

Rehabilitation

Building on the strengths of the Upton assets, specifically the housing stock, development efforts should focus on preservation where appropriate. In keeping with the goals of preserving the character of the neighborhood, and building mixed-income communities with a focus on homeownership, Baltimore Housing has implemented the following preservation activities:

- On July 16, 2004, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued for the rehabilitation of 76 vacant city-owned properties in the Upton West “triangle” (Edmondson, Harlem, Myrtle and Dolphin).



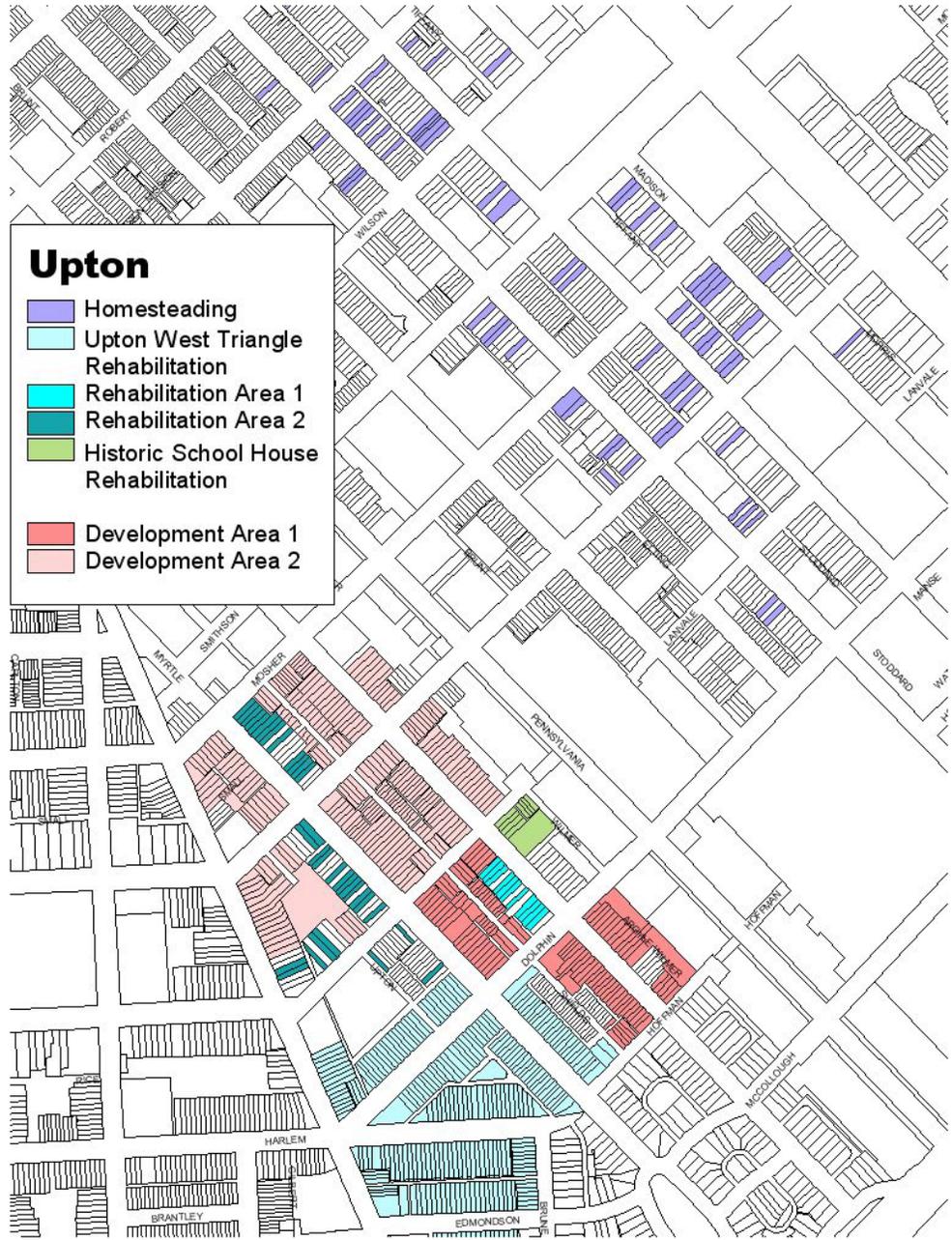
- On May 10, 2005, an RFP was issued for rehabilitation of 10 vacant city-owned properties in the 1200 block even side of Argyle.
- On June 11th 2005, Baltimore Housing offered 13 properties in historic Marble Hill for rehabilitation and homeownership through SCOPE Brokers. These townhomes are on stronger, architecturally significant blocks in the community. They tend to be large and in poor condition, but offer tremendous potential. Approximately 400 potential homeowners toured the properties and the Marble Hill community.

Additional scattered vacant properties along Madison Avenue, McCulloh Street, and Druid Hill Avenue will be made available to prospective buyers through the SCOPE Program and through RFPs.

New Construction

Dense concentrations of vacant lots and abandoned buildings provide an opportunity to introduce new mixed-income housing development into the neighborhood. New development sites should incorporate underutilized inner block parks and lots, and smaller lots along alley streets. These new development sites are appropriate along the Myrtle Avenue, Argyle Avenue, and Fremont Avenue corridors.

The rehabilitation or demolition of vacant buildings needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis based on the number and condition of vacant buildings, adjacent land uses, ownership, and economic feasibility.



Homesteading- Scattered vacant properties along Madison Avenue, McCulloh Street, and Druid Hill Avenue will be made available to prospective homeowners through the SCOPE Program and through RFPs

Upton West Triangle Rehabilitation- RFP issued for the rehabilitation of 72 vacant city-owned properties for homeownership and rental.

Rehabilitation Area 1- An RFP has been issued for rehabilitation of 10 vacant city-owned properties.

Rehabilitation Area 2- Scattered vacant properties will be offered for rehabilitation for mixed-income housing

Historic School House Rehabilitation- Harriet Beecher Stowe House rehabilitation for heritage/ community-oriented facility and open space.

Development Area 1- Assemblage of properties to offer for new mixed-income housing

Development Area 2- Assemblage of properties to offer for new mixed-income housing. Request for qualifications (RFQ) will be offered to determine design, phasing, etc.

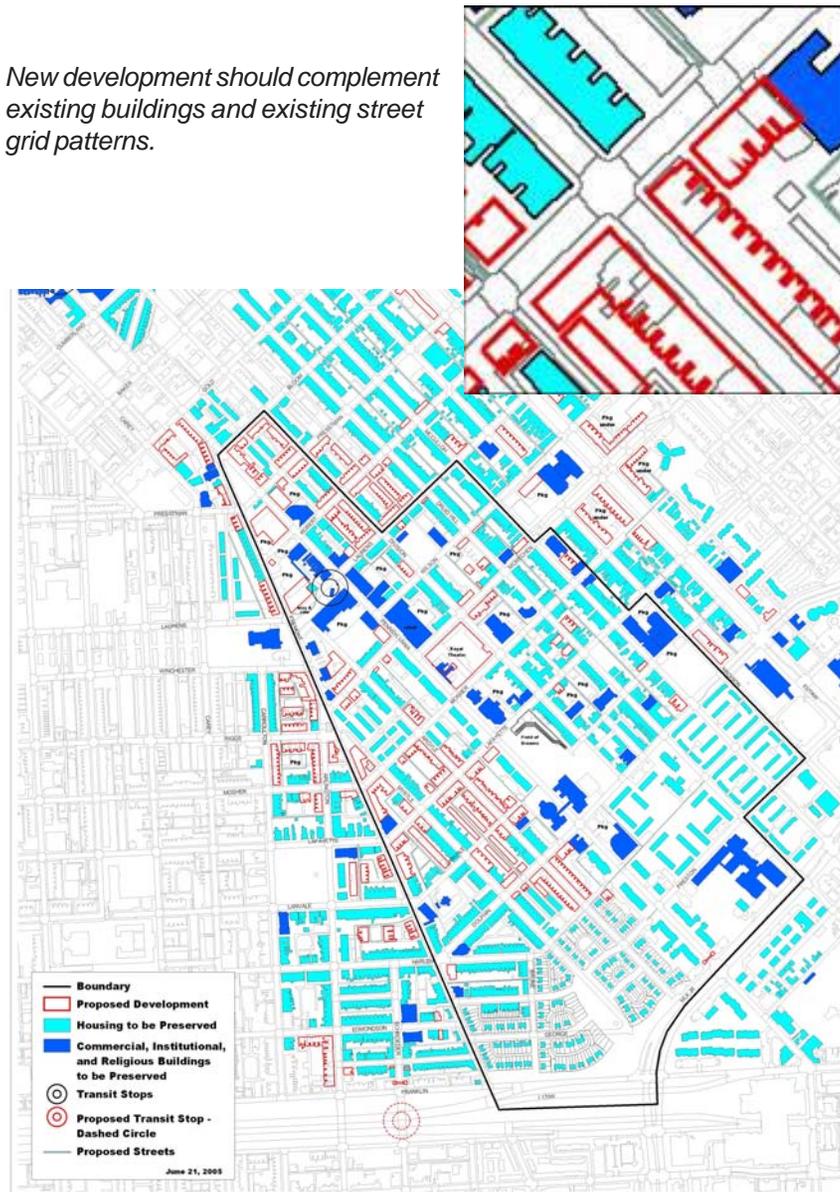
Urban Design

Good design incorporates all aspects of an environment: buildings, streets, open spaces and landscapes. What spaces look like, feel like, how they encourage people to use the space and interact with one another and how they provide connections and linkages to what already exists must be taken into consideration as Upton creates its new development patterns.

To ensure good urban design in Upton, the following steps should be taken:

- Require that all plans be reviewed and approved by an Upton Design Review Committee.
- Create a pattern book for new development. Develop guidelines for massing, placement and materials to ensure that new development reflects established development patterns.
- Create design guidelines that encapsulate the following principles:
 - Capture the local architectural flavor. Upton's distinctive "feel" should be reflected in new development through the building envelope, height, setback, design and materials.
 - Replace missing or deteriorated original features in exterior rehabilitation with duplicate features.
 - Consistent with Upton's original development pattern, all four corners on a street should be developed.
 - Maintain the rowhouse feel. Upton is a community of rowhouses and this pattern should be reflected in new design.
 - Make parking more efficient. New development should have shared parking arrangements. Design requirements should require landscaping, lighting and the use of green design materials.

New development should complement existing buildings and existing street grid patterns.



Land Use

Land use regulations for Upton are controlled by the zoning code and the urban renewal plan. These regulations need to be updated to complement the objectives of the master plan. For example, the land use regulations should discourage marginal rental properties. One way to achieve this is by limiting the number of apartments that are permitted in buildings based on a property's total square footage. Land use controls can also address live/work spaces, corner stores, parking, and a variety of other issues that impact quality of life.

Recommendations

1. Create a mixed income community.
2. Preserve Upton's historic character by rehabilitating existing houses and utilizing good urban design techniques in new construction.
3. Create development parcels that foster large scale change.
4. "Clean and green" vacant land.
5. Restrict inappropriate land uses and encourage appropriate land uses.

COMMERCIAL

Upton's commercial district has always been centered on Pennsylvania Avenue and is currently concentrated in the 1500-2000 blocks. Excluding the Avenue Market, there is approximately 102,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space in 51 spaces that are marketed for retail use. 14% of this space, or 14,600 square feet in 13 spaces, is vacant. This vacancy rate is significantly higher than a "healthy" vacancy rate of 8%.



Some effort has been made to improve the physical environment within the core of this retail district. There are relatively new street lamps and trash bins, sidewalks are in good condition and there is a sign welcoming consumers to "the Shopping Zone - Pennsylvania Avenue Commercial Corridor." The Main Street program is making progress in working with individual merchants and with the police in minimizing loitering and drug issues.

The former Lafayette Market re-opened as the Avenue Market in 1996 following a \$3 million renovation. The Baltimore Public Markets Corporation, a private, non-profit operator, took over management in 2001. Approximately 28 merchants sell meat and produce, health food, fast food, floral arrangements, clothing and gifts. There are also businesses providing check cashing and other services. Over the years drug dealing on the streets has affected perceptions of security as well as sales volumes. Increased police activity has helped reduce the level of drug trafficking during the last several years, and more recently, security cameras have dramatically reduced negative activities.

Pennsylvania Avenue participates in two city-supported economic development programs. The Avenue is one of 10 Retail Business District License (RBDL), in which merchants pay 25 cents per square foot and the Market pays an annual fee of \$2,625 for promotion and marketing activities. Pennsylvania Avenue was also designated as one of Baltimore City's Main Streets and became eligible for technical assistance and funds to upgrade the district's physical appearance. Since 2000, public investment in the Main Street program has totaled almost \$351,000, including \$100,000 in grants for the façade improvement program. The 28 façade projects leveraged an additional \$200,000 in private investment. Data also indicates that since 2000 there has been a net gain of 10 new business openings, relocations, or expansions yielding 22 new full time positions and 24 new part time positions. In addition, approximately \$250,000 in capital improvement funds have been spent on new pedestrian lighting and trash cans.



Heritage Tourism

Architectural and historic tourism is one of the most popular and growing segments of the travel industry. Upton's historical wealth is an opportunity to create financial wealth, to attract investment and to reverse the neighborhood's negative image. Efforts to become a nationally ranked African American heritage tourism destination should be supported and enhanced through the following efforts:

- Complete the Baltimore Area Heritage Trail Markers' program. Design and install interpretive signage along a Pennsylvania Avenue Heritage Trail. The trail would be in the style of Heritage Walk, offering guided tours with trained, uniformed Urban Park Rangers. In addition, create a musical heritage trail using audio, print, and web media.
 - Establish an Upton African American Heritage Center. Upton's history should be celebrated, documented and made publicly available to encourage tourism and to attract additional academic interest.
 - Increase the awareness of prominent residents. Many blocks in Upton have included a resident that gained local or national recognition. Their accomplishments should be everyday reminders of Upton's past and should serve as role models for area youth.
- Seek local or national landmark designation for such properties as:
 - The Thurgood Marshall House
 - Harriet Beecher Stowe House, 1223-25 Argyle Avenue, the oldest known public school in Baltimore and the oldest standing African American public school
 - St. Peter Claver Church, the first African American Catholic Church in the City and possibly in the country
 - The Arch Social Club
 - Henry Hobson Richardson's Moorish keyhole properties in the 1500 block of Druid Hill Avenue
 - 1425-1427 McCulloh Street, the original location of the Church Advocate Press and the House for Friendless Colored People
 - 1216 McCulloh Street, former home of William Norman Bishop, a founding member of the Baltimore Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity
 - 1206 Druid Hill Avenue, former home of William Fitzgerald, the first African American male to pass the written bar exam



Pennsylvania Avenue Redevelopment Collaborative

Pennsylvania Avenue's revitalization efforts are managed by the Pennsylvania Avenue Redevelopment Collaborative (PARC), which includes a two-person professional staff. PARC, an outgrowth of the Pennsylvania Avenue Taskforce, has been the catalyst for a lot of change in the commercial district, including bringing together representatives of all the local community development corporations around the Avenue. PARC has also had success in helping to promote the historical and cultural importance of the Avenue through jazz concerts and the implementation of the annual Cadillac Parade. PARC's most successful effort is "Jazz on the Avenue," a free weekly concert series on Friday nights. PARC is also charged with capitalizing on The Avenue's heritage tourism opportunities and has been the driving force behind the Royal Theater Monument.

Overall, the commercial district suffers from a lack of identity marketing despite its strong cultural history. There is a need for urban design improvements to engage the commuter and retain the consumer. Specific improvements such as lighting, signage, façade treatments, public art and programmed public spaces should be part of an overall marketing strategy.

In the short term, priorities for improving Pennsylvania Avenue include:

- Concentrated effort to improve 1600 -1800 blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue. Efforts might include acquisition of select sites to assemble bigger parcels.
- Work with property owner of the 1600 block on redevelopment proposal
- Work with the Avenue Market to strengthen existing merchants and create better connections with surrounding merchants.

- Determine the best means to provide a quality grocery store, either through upgrades of the existing store or attracting a new store
- Continue to implement the \$3.3 million streetscape projects from Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd to North Avenue
- Continue to work on the redevelopment of the Sphinx Club in the 2100 block

Long term projects and improvements might include:

- Legends Park Streetscape
- Billie Holliday Statue Rehab
- Light up Pratt Library Gateway to "the Avenue"
- Arch Social Club Gateway to "the Avenue"
- Hamlin Business Center Retail and Office on 2200 block
- Royal Theater and Community Heritage Center
- Development Opportunities on 1400-1500 blocks

Recommendations

1. Build on Jazz on the Avenue as a way to promote and attract additional visitors.
2. Make Pennsylvania Avenue the centerpiece of a heritage marketing strategy.
3. Recruit retailers that relate to a heritage theme.

TRANSPORTATION

Upton developed around a traditional street grid, which is largely intact and consists of through and local streets. Through streets include McCulloh Street, Dolphin Street, Druid Hill Avenue, and Pennsylvania Avenue. Local streets include Argyle Avenue, Myrtle Avenue, Brune Street, Lanvale Street, West Lafayette Avenue, Mosher Street, McMechen Street, Robert Street, Presstman Street and Bloom Street. Although Eutaw Place is not officially within the study area, it is included in the traffic analysis due to its impact on Upton's streets.

A significant volume of downtown-oriented through traffic is found on Eutaw Place, McCulloh Street, Druid Hill Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue. Traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue is not excessive, and provides needed access and exposure to the local businesses. Traffic on Druid Hill Avenue and McCulloh Street is more of a problem relative to the scale of the street environment, with very little "breathing space" between the rows of houses on either side of the street. A significant volume of the traffic on these two streets travels at excessive speeds for such an environment. To combat excessive speed, the traffic signal cycle length should be reduced to 55 seconds, with a consistent 25 mile per hour offset between the signal timing at successive intersections.

Local streets have low traffic volumes, but are not perceived as and do not operate as local streets. There is virtually no difference in the basic design of the local and through streets in Upton. Most local streets are approximately 40 feet wide with buildings built right up to the sidewalks and property line. Local streets should be designed as livable streets, which represents a return to the belief that a community's streets are the center of public life. On livable streets, priority is given to residential living and community interaction. One way to achieve this is by using traffic calming measures such as landscaped islands, landscaped traffic "chokers," street trees, angle parking and two way street segments. Another way to make streets more livable is to activate the

street edge. Many of the buildings on Upton's east-west streets include blank walls that create a feeling of isolation. New development should be oriented to the street to help increase the eyes and ears on the street.

Fremont Avenue and Myrtle Avenue were once through streets, but have been cut off by Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and the Franklin-Mulberry Expressway, and now function as local streets. However, the traffic controls were never changed to reflect this. Design features and traffic controls should therefore be implemented to reinforce the identify of local streets and distinguish them from through streets.



Transit

Upton has the only truly community-oriented Metro station in the entire MTA system and is also served by three MTA bus lines: the #5, the #7 and the #21. The Metro station's unattractiveness detracts from its role as a community asset and its potential to attract development. In order for the Metro to be the type of asset it should be, there needs to be concentrated effort on commercial and residential revitalization, but the MTA must also strengthen and reorganize its entire transit system. As a community oriented station, the Upton Metro Station should not be a significant bus transit hub, but it should be possible for Upton residents to gain access to virtually the entire MTA transit system by riding the Metro from Upton to any of numerous bus-rail transit hubs located at other Metro stations.

The #5 and #7 bus routes are redundant with the Metro route. According to the Greater Baltimore Bus Initiative proposal, the #7 should be eliminated because of this redundancy, eliminating local service on Pennsylvania Avenue. Even as they are currently operated, the #5 and #7 buses through Upton do not have as much of a local orientation as they should. The result is that some destinations are "over-served," while many other destinations do not have direct transit access from Upton.

While riders in the nearby communities of Reservoir Hill and Druid Heights rely on these buses as their closest and most convenient transit services, these routes must also serve faraway areas such as Cedonia and Canton. They cannot do both effectively, and so all markets suffer. The long length of the bus routes reduces reliability, while the need for local connections slows down riders who must go long distances.

State Center

Upton residents could benefit from improved pedestrian access to the State Center Metro Station and improved amenities in the immediate station area. In 2005, State and City stakeholders initiated a process to examine links between Upton and State Center as part of a broader effort to develop a "State Center Transit Oriented Development Strategy." Key concepts presented in the draft study include: (1) transit should function as an asset to the community and (2) State Center could become an activity center that connects Upton with surrounding neighborhoods, including Bolton Hill, Seton Hill, Mount Vernon, McCulloh Homes, and Marble Hill. Additional residential density and mixed retail and office uses are envisioned as ways of helping to activate the area, and provide stronger connections from Pennsylvania Avenue to Penn Station. The potential for phased redevelopment of the State Center area could have strong positive implications for Upton, particularly McCulloh Homes, and area residents will want to ensure their full participation in this process to help realize this potential.

Recommendations

1. Create more neighborhood-friendly streetscapes and traffic patterns.
2. Improve transit service and the links between the neighborhood and transit.
3. Participate in planning for State Center to ensure that redevelopment in the area supports neighborhood goals.

NEIGHBORHOOD APPEARANCE AND CIVIC ACTION

Recreation and Open Space

A significant part of restoring Upton is creating open spaces that serve as community focal points and gathering spaces. Upton's major open spaces are all underutilized because they are poorly maintained and perceived to be unsafe. Efforts should concentrate on making existing open spaces work rather than on creating new parks. The community has four significant open spaces: the recreation fields at Booker T. Washington Middle School, the Marshall Recreation Field on Pennsylvania Avenue, the Henry Highland Garrett Park on Druid Hill Avenue and a community park in the 400 block of Islam Way and Wilson Street. With the exception of the Henry Highland Garrett Park, the open spaces are poorly maintained. There is no evidence that the spaces are programmed for specific sports such as soccer or football and there is no play equipment or seating. Tennis and basketball courts are not well maintained and there is no signage indicating operating guidelines.

Besides the designated open spaces, there is little "green" character to Upton. Seventy-eight percent of Upton's 188 acres are paved. A majority of the hard surfaces are streets, sidewalks and parking lots. Buildings without windows reinforce the sense of an oppressive space. Large amounts of concrete and hard surfaces can increase the temperature of a community by as much as ten degrees in the summer. Reducing the amount of impervious surface by 20% over 10 years will make the neighborhood more inviting.



Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Increasing safety and the perception of a safe environment is one of the most important steps that Upton's residents can take to restoring their neighborhood. Safe Neighborhood Design emphasizes how design changes can make a neighborhood safer through natural surveillance and by increasing "eyes and ears" on the street:

- Close unused alleys and streets with low traffic volumes. Closing alleys can help facilitate access to parking and consolidate development sites. Closing alleys can also be used to restrict drug dealers access to the community.
- Use development to create a safe environment. Blocks of vacant and abandoned houses create a feeling of isolation and create a welcoming environment for drug dealing and other types of crime. Redeveloping these blocks will create natural surveillance.
- Distinguish between public and private spaces. Use signage, fencing and landscaping to signal public and private spaces.
- Organize the community. The best defense against crime is an active, organized and aware community with Block Watches and Citizens on Patrol.

Faith Based Collaboration

Upton has more than 30 faith-based institutions that have the potential to be a powerful force in changing the physical and economic climate of the community. This potential is, however, diminished through a series of individual community development corporations that have good intentions and ideas but lack the capacity to implement these projects within a reasonable time frame. Many of these projects also duplicate efforts by including community centers, parking lots and senior housing. To avoid future duplication, the faith based organizations should create a coordinated community development initiative and managing organization. By merging resources, including funding, Upton's faith-based community will be in a position to be a powerful agent for change. This entity would serve as a planning and coordinating organization and could undertake the following activities to build momentum for ongoing faith based collaboration:



- Conduct a social needs assessment. A comprehensive inventory of services, catchment areas, clients and funding sources should be created as a first step towards preventing duplication of services and identifying priorities for collaboration.
- Create a Live Near Your Worship program. Similar to the Live Near Your Work Program, Live Near Your Worship would offer parishioners financial incentives for homes purchased within Upton's boundaries.
- Use lighting to make churches a focal point. Create a focal point for residents and tourists by developing a nighttime lighting plan for Upton's churches that emphasizes their dramatic architecture features while providing an important safety feature.

Promote the Neighborhood

Upton is a well-kept secret, and it is time to tell Upton's story in different ways to attract different audiences. The architecture and proximity to downtown and the University of Maryland are features that can be used to bring Upton to the attention of investors and homeowners seeking to take advantage of the City's current revival.

Strategies for promoting neighborhood investment include:

- Develop an ongoing neighborhood-based communication system. Throughout the planning process, stakeholders talked about the need to make the community more aware about what is happening in their neighborhood.
 - Create a merchant funded newsletter designed to promote the Avenue.
 - Hold annual town meetings to review progress made and to solicit ideas for new projects.
 - Create an Upton web page that provides community information and links to job training, health care, education and other types of technical assistance.
- Capitalize on Upton's heritage. There is growing appeal to living in an historic neighborhood and to remodeling historic homes. Upton is one of the Mid-Atlantic region's most prominent African American communities and can be the subject of a region-wide marketing effort that is targeted to multiple market segments.
 - Develop a marketing theme reflecting Upton's prominent individuals and events and target to the African American community.
 - Prepare a marketing package based on Upton's historic assets and distribute it to both historic and

African American publications within the Mid- Atlantic region.

- Organize an annual “Upton Historic Home Tour.”
 - Develop a walking tour of the neighborhood.
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- Develop lifestyle-based marketing campaigns. Organize Upton’s assets into marketing campaigns that will appeal to a variety of lifestyles. Develop campaigns based on the PRIZM customer segmentation model that provides 66 different life-style types based on ethnic diversity, family type, age, education, employment and lifestyle traits. Examples of types include Bohemian Mix, Urban Achievers, Urban Elders and Movers and Shakers.

Recommendations

1. Improve existing Recreation and Open Space.
2. Utilize crime prevention through environmental design techniques to make the community safer.
3. Encourage Faith Based Collaboration.
4. Conduct a marketing campaign.

AREA SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Marble Hill / Eastern Edge

Marble Hill and the Eastern edge of Upton are relatively stable. Recommendations for this area are intended to build upon existing strengths and take advantage of developments in adjacent neighborhoods. The focus here should be on preserving and redeveloping existing structures in order to increase housing values. Corner stores should be restored as commercial or office space with apartments on the upper stories.

New infill housing should be built on vacant lots in order to restore the original development pattern of the area. Mixed-use development should be encouraged along the edges in order to create a more seamless integration between communities. In addition, rising real estate values along Eutaw Place and Spicer's Run should be leveraged to create more investment in Upton.

Recommendations include:

- McCulloh Street and Druid Hill Avenue should be returned to two-way traffic flow.
- Corner stores should be restored as commercial or office space with apartments on the upper stories.
- Eutaw Marshburn Elementary School, Pedestal Gardens and the Bolton Hill Shopping Center should be redeveloped as high-density residential and mixed-use developments.
- A rear façade treatment program should be created for homes facing Saturn Field on Division Street and West Lafayette Avenue to improve the appearance of the properties.
- A gateway entrance to the community should be created at the intersection of Eutaw and Dolphin streets.
- Booker T. Washington Middle School should be enhanced as a community amenity by demolishing the modern addition to restore the school's architectural integrity and create additional open space.

Upton West/Heritage Crossing

Rehab and redevelopment in the southern and western edge of Upton should focus on strengthening Heritage Crossing and using it as a springboard for additional investment. In addition, it should capitalize on current development happening west of Fremont Avenue. Stable housing should be preserved to maintain the historic character of the area. Large-scale infill and rehab opportunities also should be created.

- A first priority for the neighborhood should be the large-scale rehabilitation of the area bound by Fremont Avenue, West Lafayette Avenue, Harlem Avenue and Shields Place, also known as the Edmondson Avenue Triangle, in order to capitalize on the success of Heritage Crossing.
- A new local historic district should be created for the 800 blocks of Edmondson and Harlem avenues, the 700 blocks of Dolphin and Brune Streets, the 1100 block of Shields Place, the 100-1300 blocks of Myrtle Avenue and the 700-900 blocks of Fremont Avenue.
- Live/work and residential units should be developed on Fremont Avenue.
- Corner lots should become development opportunities for institutional uses.
- The Upton School should be redeveloped for a community use.
- Some traffic signals should be replaced with four-way stop signs.

Pennsylvania Avenue

Pennsylvania Avenue has historically been the commercial center of Upton and continues to be so today. Gateways should be created at the northern and southern ends of the street to create more of a destination feel. Vacant and marginal properties should be redeveloped in order to retain existing businesses and attract new uses. Historic attractions and entertainment venues should be developed to make Pennsylvania Avenue a destination for more than just shopping. The Avenue Market should become a food anchor for the neighborhood, much like Broadway Market in Fell's Point and Cross Street Market in Federal Hill.

- A southern gateway and icon should be created at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.
- The existing apartments on the even side of the 1400-1500 blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue should be redeveloped as higher density units.
- The green space in the 1200-1300 blocks should be enhanced as a community amenity.
- The pedestrian bridge connecting Templeton Elementary School should be redeveloped to include more glass and to become one of Upton's gateways.
- Upton Heritage Center should be developed along Pennsylvania Avenue, potentially as part of the Sphinx complex.
- Heritage Destination Retail should be created in the 1900 block of Pennsylvania Avenue.
- Realign Fremont Avenue at Pennsylvania Avenue to expand opportunities for open space and simplify traffic patterns.

Residential/ Mixed-use Area

The transition zone between Marble Hill and the Pennsylvania Avenue commercial district should be treated as a mixed use residential corridor. Development here should capitalize on the proximity to the Metro station and proposed town center. Open space should be leveraged as an amenity to attract market rate buyers. Institutional and commercial uses should be incorporated into the urban fabric. Residential redevelopment opportunities should be designed to increase natural surveillance of the area.

- Preserve and renovate Carver Hall.
- Strengthen Total Health Care as a community institution.
- Add market-rate housing in the 1600-1700 blocks of Division Street.
- Orient new housing to take advantage of open space and natural surveillance opportunities.